



MassWildlife

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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Massachusetts Eagle Information

Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey

On January 9, 2009, MassWildlife personnel and volunteers across the state will conduct a concentrated bald eagle survey of major rivers, lakes, reservoirs and the coast. This event is part of a nationwide Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey held every year in early January. Ground teams will be covering known eagle territories statewide during the day. In 2008, 48 bald eagles were documented in Massachusetts during the one day event.

Facts & Figures on the Massachusetts Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey

During survey inception year (1979), total eagles surveyed statewide: **8**

January 2008, total eagles surveyed statewide: **73**

Record survey, January 1998: **76**

Average nationwide total of eagles surveyed : **13,000 – 16,000**

Documented origins of wintering bald eagles based on leg bands: Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan

Current nesting figures

Number of eagle territories in 2008: **26**

Distribution of nesting territories: Pittsfield, Sheffield, Sandisfield, Conn. River Valley, Quabbin Reservoir, Merrimack River (Haverhill, W. Newbury), Wachusett Reservoir, Quaboag Pond, Assawompsett Pond Complex (Lakeville area), Wattupa Ponds and Westport River area.

In 2008, 22 of 24 nests produced chicks.

Total chicks fledged (birds that hatched and survived to fly) in 2008: **33**

Total chicks fledged 1989-2008: **300**

Last suspected Massachusetts historic wild nesting: Snake Pond, Sandwich, 1905

Federal Status: Delisted from Endangered to Threatened status 1995. Delisted at the federal level 2007.

Status in Massachusetts: Listed as Endangered on the Massachusetts Endangered Species List due to the low numbers in the state.

A **fact sheet** on bald eagle natural history is available at:

http://www.mass.gov/dfwle/dfw/nhesp/species_info/nhfacts/haliaeetus_leucocephalus.pdf . For the most up-to-date population and nesting information, please contact the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife at Field Headquarters, One Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581, (508) 389-6300.

(more)

www.mass.gov/masswildlife

Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

Field Headquarters, One Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581 (508) 389-6300 Fax (508) 389-7890

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Table Showing Midwinter Eagle Counts from 1998 - 2008

YEAR	Eagles Counted
2008	73
2007	48
2006	52
2005	74
2004	61
2003	50
2002	70
2001	59
2000	54
1999	60
1998	76

Eagle Restoration in Massachusetts

The restoration of bald eagles to Massachusetts is a great success story. MassWildlife along with many other conservation minded partners began the restoration effort in 1982 after eagles were discovered wintering in the Quabbin Reservoir area.

Young eaglets were transported from wild nests primarily from Canada to be raised in cages overlooking the reservoir. When the birds were old enough to fly, the cage doors were open and the birds were free to fly. This process, called hacking, assures that the young birds would view the area as their home base. It takes five years for an eagle to grow to maturity and the hope was that the eagles would choose the Quabbin area to nest when grown. This has occurred and over time, nesting has also occurred in other parts of the state, involving eagles descended from the original eaglets as well as other descendants of “hacked” birds from other northeastern states.

The restoration efforts were funded through several sources; major funding came from the former Bank of Boston and hunting and fishing license fees (Inland Fish & Game Fund), the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Fund, as well as support from National Grid, the Massachusetts Audubon Society and federal aid from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Eagle Restoration through translocation and hacking – 1982 through 1988

Number of eaglets trans-located: **42**

Donor state and provinces: Michigan (2), Manitoba (4), Nova Scotia (36)

Number of eagles fledged from hack tower: **41**

First territorial behavior observed: 1987 Quabbin

First housekeeping nest discovered: 1988 Quabbin

First eaglets fledged from wild nests: 1989 (3 chicks from 2 Quabbin nests)

Partnerships—MassWildlife acknowledges and appreciates support from National Grid, a partner in Bald eagle restoration from 1982 to the present year. National Grid has supplied a helicopter for the aerial survey of the Quabbin Reservoir and Connecticut River.